

ten times more difficult in the present time when whole masses of men do not unite for the love of abstract ideas, as they did in the ages of faith. The meanest fear, the fear of enthusiasm, keeps us generally too much apart from each other; perhaps the proudest boast of our Society is the number of people it has induced to be single-heartedly enthusiastic. We have not lost our hold on those original principles and on that original influence to which the Union owes its origin—and beyond all this, there is no possibility of identifying the Union with any of the many controversies that rage round such a big subject as education. We appeal, I think, to deeper needs and more indisputable ties. We are members of a Society which admits that it is feeling its way, that invites all contributions of suggestion and experience. Now in a society of this sort there is a fact which no one can overlook. Of some bodies you might be passive members, of this you are active members. This is a particularly inspiring view of membership: the knowledge that it is not only what you gain, but what you give, that will really bring about that true inward success which is worth more than any evidences of material success and on which our whole future depends. You can give sympathy and co-operation and you can help us to wait for results that often seem so long in coming.

We have at least one claim that may outlast the claims of many other causes—we are, in a very real sense, founded upon Nature, and in the midst of the clamour and talk and complications of modern life we have to turn our attention to the study of the nearest and simplest duties and yet the most important of all, the training of future generations, remembering that the difficulties though ever new are eternally old, or, as Stevenson expresses it in one of those fine sentences of his, when speaking of the over-subtleties of literature, "We have heard perhaps too much of lesser matters. Here is the door, here is the open air. Let us go into the ancient world."

FRANCES BLOGG.

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CONFERENCE NOTES AND JOTTINGS.

It was perhaps an ironical Fate that ordained that for the first two days of the Conference this year, meetings of the Women's National Liberal Club should be held in the same building, in a room exactly opposite to that in which *Parents' Reviews* lent a patriotic touch of colour; pale grey Reports reminded us that life is serious, and Mrs. Steinthal and Mrs. Howard Glover spoke of those principles and theories which we are proud to hold and practise under the mystic letters P.N.E.U. When we were busy with pencils and note-books during an emphatic pause, a loud burst of applause from across the landing startled the stillness and spoiled the effect. Some straying fledglings listened for ten minutes at divers times to the opinions of National Liberal Women, and then discovered with a hot sense of wrong-doing that they were in the wrong hall! That was scarcely as bad as the feelings of those enthusiastic members unpacking and arranging for the Conference, who were pounced upon by a breaking-up meeting, and asked to pass on a gruesome pro-Boer pamphlet concerning "Women against the War." But these were bubbles, and transitory ones. The week's audience was large, varied, and enthusiastic. A most successful students' meeting was held at the close of the week, at which the chairman succeeded, oh, rare task, in keeping order, and getting some business done; but that will be duly noticed elsewhere, with the solemnity it deserves. These are mere pleasant recollections—impressions taken and afterwards felt. It was difficult to take many serious notes. The speakers were so interesting that one did not want to write down one thing for fear of missing the next, and the achievements of the reporters present filled one with awe. The lady-reporters were so business-like and sympathetic; their masculine fellows so assured they could do it better themselves, and would do so *when* they sent in their reports. But I must proceed to Mrs. Steinthal's paper, of which really painstaking notes are lying before me. Her subject was "Good Manners"

—she called it the “Old Grace and the New Intellect,” but that was what it really meant. And all who listened could not but feel that she was herself a charming example of what she wished us to train the children to be. It was a thoroughly characteristic paper, graceful and old-world, breathing that spirit of courtesy and innate refinement that stamps a gentlewoman. We were warned of High School manners—that air of sufficiency and pretended knowledge that robs our younger sisters' society of all pleasure. Grace had its day fifty years ago—Intellect is flourishing now. We must combine the two in our children. We must make the Desire for Approbation and the Love of Admiration, which is natural to all, a foundation for Love of our Neighbours and Consideration for others that we wish to see as governing factors in our children's lives. Yet we are not to be superficial, and ask for expression without feeling. On this point an animated discussion was raised, some saying that if the expression came first, the feeling would follow as the result of habit obtained, and others equally sure that eye-service, or rather surface good manners, were worse than no manners at all—that anything good must come out of the children themselves. It is a nice point, and I think each was unconvinced. Much was charmingly said on both sides. We know Feeling *does* follow Action, and that graciousness and unselfishness do soften life, though we may feel neither gracious nor unselfish in ourselves when we are trying to be both. Someone drew a very apt comparison between Young Countries and Young People—both are so cock-sure, and have no “Betters” as such. That same lady was strong on the Church Catechism: a perfect child's guide in good manners, in which view she found many staunch supporters. The old-fashioned duty of Deference was upheld and regretted, and we were begged to make our children sympathetic, a form of true unselfishness too much neglected. Everyone felt pleased, and sure that her pet theory of good manners had been well aired, and all felt grateful to Mrs. Steintal for her charming personality.

The next paper was in every sense a contrast. It went very deep. Great psychologists were casually alluded to, as Swedenborg and St. Paul. It was, perhaps, above the heads of the back row, who were rather relieved by an interval to allow a very National and Patriotic Band to pass, but dis-

cussion afterwards proved that the back row had been in the minority, and the paper had been closely followed and much appreciated.

Miss Webb's lecture to nurses in the afternoon finished the first day as far as the ordinary Conference enthusiast was concerned. It was full of pleasant, practical hints, and thoroughly enjoyed by the roomful of nurses. Miss Webb read Stevenson's *Dedication*, which is such an ideal of what a nurse should be. Let us hope there are many who possess that “most comfortable hand” that will lead their children through many rocky places.

Miss Mason's paper on Wednesday was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Mrs. Glover, as interpreter, did her part in a manner that left nothing to be desired, except that ache which we all felt, to see our dear Principal herself, and hear her tell her own thoughts and feelings. There was such a lot in the paper that we as students, not ordinary members, recognized with joy as having heard before, first hand. The favourite “whipping boy” modern school-books, a moral that came easily out of a charmingly-read little tale. But as we were prepared to hear old things said in a new way, no one felt otherwise than pleased. Rather we felt new inspiration from hearing once again those truths which we learnt with such joy, and are trying to carry forward in our work. The value of intellectual habit was brought before us, and many of us, I am sure, felt with Miss Mason that we are apt to think too much of moral and physical habits, and overlook such important habits as concentration and meditation. In the after-discussion, this note was again sounded, and the importance of solitude for children was pleaded for. Children grow when they are alone. We dig and prune and water and feed, but the growing is done in solitude. Then the little nature, so much more atune to heavenly things than our own, hears God's Voice and communes with Him. Lessons are assimilated in solitude, resolutions taken, often unconsciously, and large strides made in directions which perhaps we have indicated. We must beware of too much investigation, over-anxiousness, lest we undo our own best endeavours.

How pleasant it would have been to hear Miss Mason telling us of those new fruits of thought, new conceptions, new ideas, new relations between each and all, that we are to strive for, to set up, to possess. And yet there was to be no

sense of striving; gentleness, love, sympathy—that large-hearted sympathy that is to put us in touch with mankind in all the ages—these were to be the means whereby we attain the newness that we should have. Sympathy that should reach from the “Early Ages to the vast fields of Modern Life.” The effect that the beauty of words and phrases have on children—the way they feel them and appreciate them—was another point which I think all must find practical example of in their work. Then here is a word for anxious teachers:—“Let the children dig out their own knowledge when they can. So gained, it is worth far more than what is given by the teacher. Too much explanation is apt to leave only the mechanical hang of the subject,” and rob it of the true inwardness it might have had if it had been left to the child’s assimilation. “I think I could understand better, mother, if you did not explain so much.”

I am afraid I give these thoughts only roughly, but you must polish the diamonds for yourselves.

Dr. Laing Gordon’s paper was enthusiastically listened to; it was thickly sprinkled with sugar-plums for the P.N.E.U., which was just what it ought to have been. He seemed to be a magician or a trader in babies; one expected to see them or hear them, to punctuate his theories and suggestions, which were full of common sense. Miss Firth was another very practical person. I am sure many mothers went away sure that nothing but the thermometer should stand between their children and a Ripplingill stove. Perhaps a prominent note throughout the Conference was: Be practical. There were many theories, old and new, but all were to some extent perfectly practical. “Do not theorise, but *do*. Try everything—solitude, browsing in books, country life, many interests, above all, habits of mind. If one thing does not succeed, try another—study your children, not as pegs for your theories, but as practical teachers, training you. Have a method and aim at continuity—aim high, and remember the best work is unseen.” Such are some of the footprints left by that delightful week.

E. C. ALLEN.

THE CONVERSAZIONE.

I AM asked to write on the *Conversazione* from “a personal standpoint.” I conclude this means I am to say what I thought about it. I think the first thing that struck me was what a large gathering it was. We had the big room in S. Martin’s Town Hall, and it was full. It makes one feel what a big thing it is, this Union of ours, and how the cause is spreading. The early part of the evening was given up to speeches, and some interesting papers were read. The chair was taken by Lady Campbell, in the absence of Lady Aberdeen, and very graciously and sympathetically she took it. One of the speakers was Professor Earl Barnes, an American professor, who has been making a great study of child psychology and taking statistics for some time in London. He spoke, amongst other things, of the need of bringing town children in touch with country life, and he suggested that large board schools should be built in the country and the children taken there every morning, either by train or in waggons, so that their school-day should be spent among things that mean so much more to them than any books can teach. This plan is being tried in one or two parts of America, and so far, I believe, is working well.

Mr. Sadler spoke with great animation. He is so enthusiastic and emphatic, you are carried along almost breathlessly and sent back with a sigh when he ceases. Perhaps one of the most interesting people on the platform was a Russian lady, who had come all the way from Moscow to be present at the Conference. I could not hear what she said, as I was some way back and her English was rather broken though fluent; but, I believe, she is trying to start a sort of P.N.E.U. in Russia and wanted to gain any information as to the working of the Society in England.

After the speeches there was a great buzz of conversation and a general movement towards the table at one end of the room, where tea and coffee were to be had. This is a very delightful part of the evening, as one meets so many old